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Subject: The Reward of Loving.

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OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE REWARD OF LOVING.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."—ROM. VIII, 28.

You will take notice, for instance, of this utterance, "And we know." It is not the language of men that dream, and suspect, and think it likely, or think it possible, or presume, according to the modern style of reverie, which is called *religious philosophy*, often. It is the language of a man who is speaking out of the fullness of conviction. And that which he knows is the most astonishing of all. If there has been anything in this world that has given pause to wisdom, and made goodness itself hold its breath, it has been the workings out, under a supposed moral government, of mischief and evil. The cross-purposes, the conflicts, the disasters, the apparent supremacy of that which is bad, the apparent disgrace and defeat of that which is good, make it seem as if the whole world were mixed together, and in a foaming, swirling confusion. As far back in the earliest periods as when that most affecting and most graphic passage which I read in your hearing was uttered, men's feet slipped, and their confidence in God failed them, and they were ready to say, as wicked men are represented as saying, "Doth God know? Doth the Most High understand? Is there any intelligence? Is there any knowledge?"

When, therefore, the apostle looks out from all this stormy scene of secular affairs and experiences, and says,

• "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God,"

he rises to a height of sublime prophesy and insight, or else of sublime impudence. It is presumption, or it is inspiration.

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

Here, after all, is a qualifying phrase. It is not that all things work together for good to everybody; and, as the context will show, it is not that all things work together for good even to good men in all the respects in which they set out to have good, in their plans; but every good man who loves God will find in the end and issue of his life, that all things have wrought together for good to

him. He will find that, whatever may have been the intermediate experience, the ultimate, the outcome, of all things, has been good. So that, when at last our life is unfolded again before us, in another sphere, and we judge with the superior judgment of the after state, we shall, I apprehend, looking through it all, atom by atom, section by section, and period by period, be satisfied with the whole plan and outlay and outplay. Then we shall see things to have been infinitely wise, and infinitely benevolent as well as wise. When we see Him as he is, we shall see things as they have been, and shall be satisfied. When we see God's likeness, we shall be more than satisfied with the divine administration in this world.

Now, it is not hard for men to suffer. It is not difficult for men to bear pain, to be disappointed, to be hindered, to be thwarted, to be put upon their mettle. So far from its being difficult, we have formed our idea of manhood to include the cheerful bearing of severe things. A man who professes to be a soldier, and cries at rain, and at winds, and at exposure, and at poor food and little of it, we laugh to scorn. Pretty soldier he is—a man who professes to be a hero, and has enough of the hero to admire heroism, but cannot emulate it! A hero is one who is superior to his circumstances. History is never done depicting those men who could live in deprivation, who could live hungry and thirsty and needy, and who could live persecuted and outcast, greater than the age in which they lived. And we need such men yet. Men they were who could sow in one year seed the fruit of which they did not reap in a score of years. We have raised our conception of manhood upon the very possibility of patient suffering, and cheerfulness in suffering. That is not all: the roads even to earthly good lie in the main through suffering. We do not bring up our children to the idea that a truly happy life is a life in which they are not obliged to learn anything. What do you think of children to whom it is said, every day, "Your father is rich; why do you study a profession? If I were in your place, I would not trouble myself to prepare for any pursuit. I would take life easy. I would not bear any burdens." Everybody knows that he who listens to such counsel is foolish. He is a candidate for destruction who does not feel the necessity, or understand the wisdom, of doing something useful. The idea of secular and social development should be that a man in order to prosper should be able to bear something, to endure something, to achieve something, to deny himself, and to so live as to control his lower nature in favor of his higher nature. That ought to enter into the very lowest conception of education. But it ought not to stop there. Before the child goes out in life he is disciplined more or less in the

family ; but the moment he is broken off from the parent tree, and stands by his own root, every ambitious and energetic young person longs for the chance to try his endurance. See how men will go, and gladly go, to China, and India ; see how they will swelter through a score of years, bearing fevers, and annoyances, and absence from home, and heart-sickness ; see how they will work during all this time, and in the midst of all these sufferings—and for what ? That at the end of these years they may be able to return home victorious. This prospect keeps them up, and enables them to endure the toil, and the deprivation, and the disagreeable features of the life which they are living. How do men go to the very extreme of climate for the sake of that which is to make them illustrious ! How will they go through the six months' night of the polar seas, losing health, sacrificing what God meant should be the very marrow of life ! They do it cheerfully, without a murmur. And they do it for what ? Not to achieve wealth, but to achieve that which is better—fame. How do we find men rising early, toiling late, and sacrificing all the ease of life, for the sake of the future ! They are building up that which they desire to attain in their imagination ; and so long as they have hope of reaching it, they are willing to go twenty years or more, dressing poorly, eating plainly, and toiling severely. Give men to see that by and by they shall have rest, or that they shall accomplish the purpose at which they aim, and they will cheerfully take hardship, and self-denial, and even pain. It is not hard for men to put up with annoyances, and go through troubles, and bear burdens, and pass sleepless nights, and suffer from disease, if only they can achieve what they long to achieve. Giant-like, they go through these things, and all they want is hope that it is not for nothing.

See, then, what the apostle says in the context :

“We are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he hope for ? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”

Hoping for future pleasures or benefits, we are content. For the sake of that which we see in the lower life, we are willing to deny ourselves and to endure, if we only have a reasonable hope of gaining it at last. And the apostle says, “A true Christian man, with a true Christian experience, is saved by hope. He lives with so large a view of life that when he experiences buffetings and self-denials and trials, he is armed against them, and is able to see that all things do work together for good.”

That which wears men out, is having pain, and burdens, and vexations, which are useless and remediless. Suspense, in which

fear rasps, grinds down life faster than anything else. And then, next to that is despair, despondency, the sense of bearing pain, in which there is no benefit or use. But all pain, all suffering, all annoyance, in this world, if it can be seen to have some issue in good hereafter, is easily borne. All we want is the certainty, or the hope that the result will be good. When we first look at it, it does not seem to be true that all things in this world work together for the benefit of anybody, and certainly not for the benefit of good folks. But men will admit, I think, that in ordinary times, when there is no revolution, when nature is prompt, as it were, to excess, when her laws are unimpeded and un thwarted, the ways of righteousness average more happiness in secular things than any other ways. Honesty, sincerity, affectionate kindness one toward another, truthfulness, industry, frugality—these qualities have, from the beginning of the world, averaged more happiness than any other qualities, although revolutions have struck through them, and they have been subject to great exceptions apparently. In the conflict of the world exceptions have been so many, the world has been so tossed up and down like a ship on the ocean in a perpetual storm, that the good have not always been in the ascendant. It has not always been true that men were as happy as they deserved to be, measuring according to the human standard of merit or demerit. It is not true that the purest men are the most in esteem. It is not true that truthful men and honorable men are the most prosperous in this world. Although it is the tendency of moral qualities to redound to a man's good; although he is more likely, according to the constitution of the globe, to be prospered, who follows the ways of righteousness, than any other man, yet it does not follow in actual practice, that good men are the best off—far from it. We still see that bad men have all that heart could wish; that their eyes stand out with fatness; that there are no bonds in their life or death; that they are unrestrained and lawless, both in living and dying; that they are proud and haughty. But we see, on the other hand, that their career comes to an end very suddenly. God seldom allows a wicked career which has been prosperous to go beyond the man himself. He visits it on his children if not on him; though he usually visits it on him. The aspiration, however, for holiness, being added to the strife for worldly success, good men do not seem to be blessed even spiritually. If a man submits himself to his disposition; if he has no particular desire to develop rare manhood, and to reach to higher qualities and nobler insights, it is quite possible for him, if he be a calm, placid man, to flow down the stream of life, and, taking one time with another, to have a fair aver-

age of life. But if a man wants to develop true Christian manhood; if that is more precious to him than all other things; then, on examining his heart, you shall find that his life is not easy to him; that ambition and aspiration in spiritual things are continually bringing him into conflict with his surroundings, with himself, with his fellows; and that his life is perpetually clouded, and watered by his own tears.

Hear what the apostle says in the fifteenth chapter of first Corinthians:

"If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

In the fifth chapter of Romans he says:

"We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

In other words, We know that the hunger and thirst after righteousness which shall be fulfilled in every man is one which takes him through trouble near to its fulfillment. So that if a man be good in the moral sense of the term, and good in the spiritual sense of the term, if you look at his life, it does not seem as though all things did work together for his good.

But let us add some other elements, and then let us look again.

First, it is to *those who love God* that the apostle said that all things should work together for good. They do not regard all their good as secular. They do not regard that alone as good which the hand can handle. A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. His good lies in his affections. In the household the soul's riches give only that which everlastingly the soul desires—peace, happiness, the confidence which love breeds, and that intersphering intercourse of love in which each thought of one rings on the heart of another as the stroke of a bell, and fills the house full of all the plentitudes and confidences of love. And is there any poverty so great as to make such a household poor? Is there any misfortune so great as to disturb the happiness of those who highly esteem each other, and who dwell in a true and refined love? And what can befall those who love God, and are conscious of being loved by him again? What can harm them? What can diminish the flow of their happiness, provided their souls drink at this fountain, and are warmed at this fire? This one single circumstance settles the whole controversy.

"All things shall work together for good to them that love God."

Loving God, they know what the whole world-life is worth. After all, love is the wine of existence. When you have taken that, you have taken the most precious drop that there is in the cluster. When

one has once risen to the experience of love, and then learned how to abide in it, why can he not very calmly say, "I care not what happens: I have the only thing which makes life itself of any value—the love of God shed abroad in my soul, as a life and as a power. What bitterness can there be where there is such sweetness? What fear can there be where perfect love casts out fear? What weakness can there be where the might of the eternal God rests perpetually on the eternal soul? What treasure can there be where all things are owned for love, and where is mutual and reciprocal Fatherhood and Sonship—where all that there is in the external soul is held for the benefit of all other souls?

"All things [shall] work together for good to them that love God."

Come weal, come woe, come pain, come pleasure: there is little but love; and still less if one is in the transport of a true and noble love. How many have it? The foretaste and glimpse of this truth, the dawnings of that love which, I trust, comes to every one, at least, once in his lifetime, where nature itself changes to one great chorus—alas, that it should not continue for years, during which the heavens have a meaning they never had before, and seem an unrolled scroll of the new life of love. When one, coming forth, hears the very trees congratulating him, and all the leaves clapping their hands for joy; when the minutest things in nature partake of the benison of a soul that is in the first great revelation of love, and it turns aside the foot that the worm may live on—then kindness and benevolence, in this new-found feeling, makes the world seem beautiful, and the soul is lifted up. Is there not in this some premonition, some indication of the great truth that the soul that is once filled with the truest divine love is made superior to circumstances like these, and pours out all its own bright experiences? This is the love which makes the darkest places bright, and out of its own reverberating happiness comes back again to the source from whence it sprang.

"All things work together for good to them that love God."

Is that true? Yes. He that has inherited the love of God—what has the world more to give him? What can the world reach to take away from him? He has the chief thing already.

Such a person believes in a divine providence. He cannot but believe in it. And that will be a source of exquisite satisfaction. Though he cannot understand the order of things, there is the peace of the experience. Believing that "all things work together for good to those who love God," it becomes a pleasure to stand in the consciousness that God wishes us to endure and to suffer. All that a true soldier wants to know, is, that he has understood his orders. If the word is, "Stand at that hill, hold that fringe of woods, until

every man is cut off," that is enough. And he only who does hold it is thought worthy to take the crown. That is the reward of him alone who will give up his life dearly rather than budge one inch. And the consciousness of fidelity is itself remuneration to a true soul. He will stand and endure the pain and the suffering without a murmur, being consoled by the belief that all things shall work together for good to him, because he loves God.

We are apt to think that having our own way is the pleasantest thing in the world. It may be a pleasure. I will not deny that there is some pleasure in it. Most men like to have their own way, and take special pleasure in things which go as they want to have them. But there is more pleasure in giving up one's own way than in having it. And that pleasure is in proportion as one is strong of will. It is hard for a strong-willed man to bow down and yield submission and obedience to a weak-willed man. It is hard for an elephant to say his prayers to an ant. When society is so out of joint that men find that they are under the rule and dominion of minims, and that the greater is subordinate to the less, it is discordant and offensive. But once let a man feel that he is himself his own master, having wisdom and nobility and rectitude on his side, and there is nothing which he learns so much to desire as somebody that he can look up to. One gets tired and lonesome without such a person. There is no greater sweetness in this world than that of leaning, and learning implicitly to follow, provided you have one to follow who calls out your respect, and inspires your confidence and your love. And a true man, loving God, has the joy of believing that God plants him in the order of his providence where he is to stand; that from day to day his course is marked out for him; and that in bearing and suffering and achieving, he is fulfilling the wishes of God. There is no greater pleasure than the consciousness that we are obeying God's commands. The faithful child of God says, "Speak, Lord; thy servant heareth;" and in that the whole heart is filled with ecstasy.

Secondly, a true love to God kindles the conception of things far higher than mere temporalities. No one, I think, can love truly, without instantly finding that Love is the best schoolmaster. It is the most stimulating to growth of all things in the world. It is the most refining and the most enriching. And when one loves God truly and deeply, it sets him upon such a desire for improvement within, of thought and feeling and impulse; it so works upon his spiritual ideal of manhood, that it gives him another standard, and he begins to feel that "all things shall work together for good" in another sense than that which he has thought of. He may have

thought of houses and lands, and brothers and sisters, and ruler and realm; but after a little he begins to feel, "That which is done *in* me is transcendently more important than that which is done *for* me." And then comes up that saying of the Lord, so full of meaning, "The kingdom of God is within you."

What outward events and influences do to a man's inward state, is some measure of his thrift and prosperity and happiness. And blessed is the man who can say, "I have grown more patient, and therefore I am happier; I have grown wiser and better by the things which I have suffered." Once take the interior manhood as the measure in life, and see how differently one looks at things.

I think there are none who have ever in times past experienced the pressure of bereavement without a sense of wonder that the apostle should have said,

"No affliction for the present is joyous, but grievous; but afterward it worketh the peaceable fruit of righteousness."

The smitten heart always thinks, "Affliction will never work out in me anything but despair. I never can get over it nor bear it." There is a kind of paralyzing influence in affliction, particularly on sensitive natures. But is there one single crushing affliction that came upon you ten years ago, of which, when you look back upon it in long perspective, you cannot say, "Afterwards it did work out the peaceable fruit of righteousness in me"?

What acerb flavor is in the natural man! How harsh the natural pride is! How domineering the natural temper is! How cruel strength and confidence often are! How like the peacock does vanity spread all its feathers, and show all its colors, in the natural man! But when afflictions have chastened a man; when they have tempered him; when they have taught him their lessons, he learns what he can learn nowhere else but in the fire, and on the forge, and on the anvil of affliction.

It is not said that any one is made good by affliction in the beginning; but it is declared that finally affliction makes a man good. And are there not many here who can say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted"? Are there not many who, looking back upon their life, can see that the declaration of the apostle has been verified in their experience?

Ah! it was the sculpturing hand of God cutting the hard stone, and bringing out the features of the new man.

So the love of God interprets to man not only the way of God in a larger providence, but also the way of God in the formation of our inward manhood—of the spiritual man in Christ Jesus—to deliver which from the flesh is the very problem of Christianity, and of the experience of this world.

Then, to all this is to be added one more thing—the element of the future—which never departed from the mind of the apostle, and which will not need to depart from the mind of any Christian in the disciplinary stages of earthly life. He says,

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

He knew, if ever a man in this world knew, what suffering meant. If ever there was a man who felt with acute sensibility, it was the Apostle Paul. If there was ever a man whose every faculty was set to catch suffering, it was that very man. If there was ever a man who had a chance to try every part of himself in the school of suffering, it was Paul. And yet he says,

"I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

We are waiting until this discipline of life shall set us free from these animal conditions, and evolve in us a true manhood, and a plain, apparent insight of God, and of ourselves as sons of God. It is the aspiration for divinity, as well as for immortality, that comes with it.

This, then, becomes the feeling, that whatever we are bearing in this world, we have to bear only for a little while.

I have always been peculiarly subject to sea-sickness. When I was going abroad, and all the wonders of the continent were dazzling my imagination, I used to lie in my berth scarcely able to stir, wilted and worthless. I knew there were ten days between New York and Liverpool, and I used to say to myself, "Well, are you willing to take these ten days of nausea and universal disgust for the sake of the three months of exquisite joy which you are going to have on the continent?" I never was so sea-sick but that I was deliberately willing to pay the price. I said, "This is about as bad as anything can well be in this world; but for the sake of that which is beyond it I will take even this."

Returning, we had a passage of seventeen days. We came with a water-logged steamship. She was loaded down deeper by many feet than she should have been. She had contraband goods to land at Halifax, which I had the pleasure of riding upon all the way across the sea. It was stormy from shore to shore, without a single fair day. But the place to which we were going was my home; there was my family; there was my church; there were my friends who were as dear to me as my own life. And I lay perfectly happy in the midst of sickness and nausea. All that the boat could do to me could not keep down the exultation and joy which rose up in

me. For every single hour was carrying me nearer and nearer to the spot where was all that I loved in the world. It was deep, dark midnight when we ran into Halifax. I could see nothing. Yet, the moment we came into still water I rose from my berth, and got up on deck. And as I sat near the smoke-stack while they were unloading the cargo, upon the wharf, I saw the shadow of a person, apparently, going backward and forward near me. At last the thought occurred to me, "Am I watched?" Just then the person addressed me, saying, "Is this Mr. Beecher?" "It is," I replied. "I have a telegram for you from your wife." I had not realized that I had struck the continent where my family were. There, in the middle of the night, and in darkness, the intelligence that I had a telegram from home—I cannot tell you what a thrill it sent through me!

Brethren, we are all sailing home; and by and by, when we are not thinking of it, some shadowy thing (men call it death), at midnight, will pass by, and will call us by name, and will say, "I have a message for you from home; God wants you; heaven waits for you." It is but a handbreadth. And on the stormy sea are they *men*, who stop to think of discomforts when home and heart are calling for them? Are they worthy of anything but pity who are not able to bear the hardships of the voyage when they are going home? It will not be long before you and I and every one of us will hear the messengers sent to bring us back to heaven. It is pleasant to me to think that we are wanted there. I am thankful that God loves in such a way that he yearns for me—yes, a great deal more than I do for him.

Here, then, is the triumph. And with this exposition I think there are not a few of us, loving God, who can say, "Considering that God's providence is taking care of us; considering that our inward nature is to be wrought up rather than that our outward nature should be pampered; considering that we have the love and the cheer of God on the way; and considering that our journey will be short, all things do work together for our good in this larger view." Are there not a great many of us who, in the light of these things, can rise into the confidence of the apostle, and say, "I know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God"?

That condition you must put in—"to them that love God." To such all things shall work together for good. Afflictions shall work together for good to them. That is, they will cut around, and around, and around.

Did you ever watch to see a stone-cutter carve the figures that were to decorate a temple? I stood once, in Paris, where the stone is soft, and where the building-blocks are cut, not on the

ground, but in their places on the tops of the doors, and about the windows; and I saw the chiseling done. I saw the work going forward on some of the public buildings, where lions, and eagles, and wreaths of flowers were being carved. Men stood with little chisels and mallets, cutting, and cutting, and cutting the stone, here and there.

Suppose one of these blocks of stone, when it first mounts into its place, is told that it is to be a royal lion, and it is to decorate a magnificent structure. The workman commences, and after working one day, the head is rudely shaped, but you can barely tell what it is. The next day he brings out one ear. The third day he opens one eye. And so, day after day, some new part is added. The stone complains, and asks if the operation is to be an everlasting one; but the work goes on. And you cannot get anything out of stone except by myriads of blows continued until the work is done.

I hear people say, "Why am I afflicted?" For your good. "How long shall I be afflicted!" Until you cease to ask how long. Until God's work is done in you. God will go on chiseling as long as it is necessary, in order to elaborate first one feature, and then another, and then another. The work ought to go on until it is completed. And every true heart ought to say, "Lord, do not stay thy hand; cut away until I am brought out into the fair lines and lineaments of the image of God. Troubles and afflictions and blows that are sent are useless unless they make you patient to your fellows, and submissive to your lot. But rest assured that if you love God all things will work together for your good. And now join and work with them. Help God work for you.

The same is true in regard to our worldly plans; in regard to our activities and industries. I know very well that it is not easy to get along in life. I wonder that many of you get along as well as you do. I do not reproach you. I sympathize with you. I know that your life in many respects is difficult. Nevertheless, I must keep the standard up. If you cannot reach that standard of noblest manhood, still strive for it. I know it is not easy for you to bear your care in the store. I know that every one of the humbler callings has its own troubles and burdens. Everybody says, "Others have care; but I do not think anybody ever had such care as mine." Very likely that may be so. And the same thing is true of your next neighbor, and his next neighbor. Everybody has peculiar care; and everybody's burden is heavier than anybody else's. The yoke you have on to-day is the sharpest to you; and the sorrow you have is the bitterest. I know that you all have your troubles; but, after all, I know that these troubles and trials, if you love God, and will

live in the conscious love of God, are means of grace, and are all working out for you a better manhood and a nobler inheritance in the kingdom of God's glory.

I think the hardest thing for a man to contemplate is being laid aside before he is allowed to die. A man very soon drives all care away when he is allowed to work. But for a man to wait ten or fifteen years after he has got through working, when the infirmity of age is upon him, or for any other reason—I think that is the point when trouble would be the hardest to bear—with me at any rate. I should like to fall with the harness on, and die in the Lord's battle. But God may not be of my mind. It may be my lot to linger after my abilities have been very much weakened ; after my usefulness is ended. I may be obliged to lie idle a great while. Who am I ? I cannot take my choice any more than you can take your choice. It is the hand of God that is governing all things ; and if he wants to do with me as Achilles did by Hector when he tied him to his chariot wheels and dragged him in disgrace around and around the Grecian camp, I cannot help it. I am to learn that even in that there is blessing. I am to believe that all things shall work together for my good, and that I shall see how they have done so when I come to look back upon them from the other life. I am to accept this truth, not according to human measures, but as a thing to be apprehended and understood in the spiritual realm. Since “all things work together for good to them that love God,” I am to hold on to that one golden thread, *love to God*. That will bring everything right in the end.

Brethren, we are never without the need of some such truth. As the saying is, every house has a closet with a skeleton in it. Every heart has its own bitterness, its trial, its cross. And as you go on in life, you are likely to have more troubles rather than less. Therefore we need something to give us a higher sense of life ; a higher standard of what is good and what is bad ; a higher estimate of what is profitable and what is unprofitable. And as we are drawing near, so many of us, to the other side, to the further shore, it is unspeakably pleasant to think that whatever may befall us here, whatever may be the events and experiences of life, in a very little time we shall see each other where there are no more blemishes.

Did you ever think how hard it is to bear with some people whom God has put you alongside of, and whom you must bear with ? and did you ever think how beautiful they are going to be when God's work is completed ? Did you ever think that the child that has wrung your heart with anguish might be given to you in the other life more beautiful than you ever thought such a form or face.

could be? Have you ever thought that those who have stirred up anger and envy in you, and provoked you, and for whom you have been obliged to deny yourself, were in the furnace like you, and that God was working them out, and that by and by the persons whom on earth you least desired to meet, and whose names were the most cacophonous in your ear, may be presented to you in the other life as the most rare and beauteous expositions of character and of life and of love? By and by you shall see that all things have worked to help you, if you love God.

Look forward a little. When you find it hard to bear with anybody, say to yourself, "How does Christ feel about me?" When your children provoke you, think how you provoke God. When your friends are intolerable, think how you must appear to the sensitive and pure and sweet and loving Christ. When your task seems hard, think of the land just beyond. When men seem to you fit subjects for wrath, think again. Have mercy on them. If there are persons who seem so bad that you cannot endure them, take them out of this climate and twilight below, and look at them in the light of the eternal world. Bring your imagination to the side of your charity, and let your heart and fancy together make them appear as they will be when you meet them in Zion and before God. It will make the way of friendship easier and smoother. It will make your life in this world more blessed, and your passage out of it more joyful, and the life to come transcendently happy.

May God grant to us all such a revelation of love in him, that we shall be able to say, from this time henceforth and forever, "*I know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God.*"

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We desire to give thanks to thee, our heavenly Father. We have been drawn by the Spirit into the knowledge and into the love of Jesus Christ. No more is there between us and the impalpable an invisible and wide gulf. At last, we can fix our understandings and our hearts upon one who is like unto ourselves, and yet, who is God whom we may love, whom we may follow, whom we may worship, in whom, living, we shall have strength, and dying, shall rise to behold, in more glory than it hath entered into our heart to conceive, our soul's Lover and our life's Guide. Nothing shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

We thank thee for all the disclosure which thou hast made. O blessed Saviour, we thank thee for thy words, that are still alive. Though uttered long ago, they are verified; as thou didst say, *The words I speak unto you are life, are spirit.* Inextinguishable are they, and borne on, as they shall be to the end of the human race.

We thank thee not alone for the preciousness of those kindling words, but for all those other truths which thou art making known to us by the revelation of our own lives. We are, in the order of thy providence, guided from truth to truth. Thou art making us to understand the letter in its true spirit. Thou art teaching us also more than there is in the letter—unutterable things not written, nor to be written. Thou art making our hearts interpreters of the divine spirit and of the mystery of love and redemption. And we thank thee for the secret of God with so many; for the preciousness of Christ; for the hope of glory; for that forelooking which brings something before it takes hold of full possession. We thank thee for all those hours of blessedness which we have known in days gone by; for the irradiation of our darkness; for the comfort and consolation of sadness; for the inspiration of hope in the midst of fears; for courage and victory even in defeat, so that we may say, *Cast down but not destroyed.* All the way through life thou hast been near unto us to bless us even in trouble; and we look back now to see that we could not spare one single stripe or chastisement of all thy dealings with us. Thy mercies seem more and more wonderful as we recede from them. We look upon single experiences of our life and feel that it was worth all of life to have had them. And yet, they stand but as parts of that wondrous development whose meaning and whose glory we do not see. We are as dumb beasts that come from the mines bearing precious ores, and stones of priceless value, but do not know what they carry. We are bearing through life, experiences that shall be interpreted in realms above in such luster and such glory that we shall marvel that we did not understand by the way what it was that we bore.

We thank thee that thou art preparing us for that rest which remaineth for the people of God. Other things pass away; but thou dost not pass away. Other things are changing; but thou dost not change. Time has broken down familiar things; but there remains a rest upon which time has no power. There are our friends, there are our parents, most dearly beloved and most worthy of love, there are our brothers and sisters, whose hand we can clasp; and we rejoice that nothing can take this fact from us; that nothing can change it; that nothing can deprive us of its comfort.

We have given ourselves to thee, blessed Saviour, and who shall pluck us out of thy hand? We have entered upon the way which is difficult. When we look upon the combat of our passions; when we look upon the torment of the world; when we look upon all those things which men attempt to do or bear, how they fail! And yet, having given thine own Son wilt thou not with him, O Father, give us all things which are needed for our victory?

And so we live by faith, by love, by hope, and cast fear behind our backs, and are willing to suffer, and to suffer continuously, and to the end. And why should we not? Is the servant above the Master? Dear Jesus, was thy head crowned with thorns, and shall we insist upon a golden crown? Shall we forever seek ease when thou didst die for us, and didst utter prayers for us? Shall we not bear some part of our suffering for ourselves and for others?

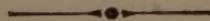
Teach us to rise above the selfishness of our own personality. May we not seek everything for ourselves—for all things are ours in the greater sphere. Grant that we may so live that every day we shall have thy presence cheering us, and saying to us, *All things shall work together for good to them that love God.*

We pray that thou wilt bless those who are not able to come to the household of the Lord. We pray that thou wilt go to them, and be in their rooms, and make them a sanctuary. Grant that they may, in their communings, find no need of the teachings and of the service of the household of God. Grant, we pray thee, that those who are sick may find thee a help to their souls. Comfort those who are in the midst of troubles and disappointments, and who know not how to spread their wings and rise above the cloud. Grant, we pray thee, that every one who is suffering under bereavements, may be able in sweet resignation to find peace in believing.

Be with all those who are called to carry burdens, which at times seem heavier than they can bear, and into whose heart the iron enters. Grant, we pray thee, that they may not seek to cast it off ignominiously, or to drown it; but may they be able to look up to thee and see thy hand even in the sharpest affliction, and learn some lesson at the hand of the Lord, so that by and by, when they shall emerge from this fever-fit of life, from these dreams, to see things as they are, they may rejoice and give thanks that they do not faint nor fall by the way.

We pray that thou wilt hear the prayers of thy people. Thou art hearing them more than they think. Teach them to plead as children plead with their parents. And listen, thou that listeneth with more love than parents listen.

And grant, we pray thee, that thy Gospel, which brings tidings of joy and peace on every side, may be made known to all, more and more. Gather in the outcast, the poor and the needy. More and more make us the almoners of thy bounty, preachers of thy word and thy truth. And grant that everywhere throughout our land, and throughout the world, the truth as it is through Christ Jesus may bring peace, and purity, and joy, and hope, and finally, salvation. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praises everlasting. *Amen.*



PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray for thy blessing to rest upon the truth which has been spoken. Not only may it comfort and strengthen us, but may it renew our faith. May it incite us to new enterprise, new endeavors, new aspirations, and new strivings after a higher life in Christ Jesus. Bless those who need comfort. Wilt thou strengthen those who are weak and ready to perish. Recall any who are wandering, having backslidden from their faith and love. And we pray that thou wilt glorify thine own name among thy people, and spread abroad the truths of the Gospel, till the name of Christ shall be all-powerful in the whole earth—the name above every name. And to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, shall be praises everlasting. *Amen.*

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